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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 000578

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/08/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [AF](#) [NL](#) [NATO](#)

SUBJECT: NATO-AFGHANISTAN: THE NETHERLANDS ON ISAF  
EXPANSION

REF: A. STATE 50477

[1](#)B. THE HAGUE 477 (NOTAL)

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR MARY DALY FOR REASONS  
1.5 (B AND D)

[1](#)1. (C) PolMilOff made ref A demarche to Dutch MFA Security Policy Bureau Operations Director Rob Gabrielse on March 8. DATT addressed these points with MOD International Policy Director BG Ton van Osch on March 9. Amb. Sobel also raised this issue as part of a March 9 discussion with FM Bot preparatory to PM Balkenende's upcoming trip to Washington (septel). The Dutch government is looking favorably at taking over leadership of a PRT, and has taken some concrete steps to prepare for a Cabinet decision. A joint MOD-MFA reconnaissance team was due to depart for Afghanistan on March 9. The team, led by MOD Operations Director Air Commodore Pieter Cobelens, will be in Afghanistan for ten days investigating possible locations for a Dutch-led PRT.

[1](#)2. (C) While the Dutch Development Ministry will also be represented on the interagency recce team, Gabrielse said that he expected the focus of a Dutch PRT would be on providing security in a specific area, as opposed to development aid work. Gabrielse reiterated previous MFA comments (ref B) that the Dutch are looking to partner with countries they are used to working with such as Canada, Belgium or Germany. Minister of Defense Kamp has taken the first step in the lengthy GONL consultative process preparatory to military deployments by sending a letter to parliament on March 3 stating that in a response to a request from the NATO SYG, the Dutch Cabinet "will investigate the desirability and opportunity of a Dutch contribution to a PRT."

[1](#)3. (C) Comment: Gabrielse expects that upon its return the recce team will likely recommend that the Dutch lead a PRT, and if so, a Cabinet decision could take place within a month. The GONL will want to ensure there is broad parliamentary support for such a decision (though strictly speaking, a parliamentary vote in support of the deployment is not necessary in the Dutch system). Post has detected cross-party support within parliament for expanding ISAF's role, if some nervousness about the risk to Dutch forces, especially from MPs who have traveled to Afghanistan in recent months. We expect the GONL to engage in extensive preparations to answer inevitable parliamentary questions about scope of mission, potential danger to Dutch forces and provisions for in extremis extraction. We note the Dutch recce team is being led by MOD Operations Director Cobelens who has been previously skeptical of the PRT mission. We judge his presence to be a clear indication that the defense staff is now serious about supporting PRTs. End Comment.  
SOBEL